

Artificial Grass in Pickering: 2026 Cost & ROI Report

Installation pricing, ten-year ownership costs, water-bill impacts and payback analysis for Pickering homeowners

REPORT	RR-2026-PIC-01 · August 2026
COVERAGE	City of Pickering, Regional Municipality of Durham, Ontario
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Artificial Grass Pickering Research publishes data-driven local studies on residential landscaping, water use and outdoor surfaces in Pickering and the Greater Toronto Area. This report is provided free for information purposes.

ABSTRACT

This report assembles published 2026 pricing for residential artificial-grass installation in Pickering and the Greater Toronto Area, then models the ten-year cost of owning a synthetic lawn against a natural lawn on a typical Pickering property. All inputs are drawn from published sources — GTA installer price guides, the Regional Municipality of Durham's water and wastewater rates, and Environment and Climate Change Canada climate normals — with every modelling assumption stated where it is used.

We find that a mid-range artificial lawn for a typical 500 sq ft Pickering backyard costs **\$6,500–\$9,000 installed**, that irrigating the same natural lawn uses roughly **27.9 m³ of water per season (about \$101 at Durham's combined rates)**, and that the investment breaks even in approximately **five years when compared against professionally serviced lawn care** — but does not pay back against do-it-yourself lawn care, where the trade-off is the owner's time rather than money.

KEY FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

\$10–25

per sq ft, installed price
range published for the
GTA in 2026

27.9 m³

seasonal irrigation for a
500 sq ft lawn (24-week
model)

\$101/yr

water + wastewater cost of
that irrigation at Durham's
combined rates

≈5 yrs

break-even vs
professionally serviced
lawn care (500 sq ft)

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1 The Pickering market and the 2026 pricing basis

Pickering is a mid-sized Durham Region city of 99,186 residents and 33,425 households, with 85% owner-occupied housing and 60% of its dwelling stock consisting of single-detached homes [1]. That combination — a large base of owner-occupied homes with private yards — positions it as one of the GTA's active residential landscaping markets. Established neighbourhoods offer conventional detached lots, while the Seaton master-planned community in north Pickering is introducing narrower 30–40 ft lots with progressively smaller backyards [2].

Three published price references anchor this report's 2026 cost basis for the GTA market, which covers Pickering: a tiered installer guide, published per-product pricing from sister markets, and a second GTA installer's range (Table 1). They converge on a single finding: **most Pickering residential projects price between \$10 and \$25 per sq ft installed**, with the middle of the market at \$13–\$18.

Table 1 — Published 2026 installed-price references for the GTA market. Sources: [3][4][5].

Reference	Basis	Published figure
GTA installer guide (entry / mid / premium)	fully installed, residential	\$10–12 / \$13–18 / \$19–25+ per sq ft
Design Turf (GTA installer)	backyard / pet turf, fully installed	\$12–20 / \$14–22 per sq ft
Perfect Yard Landscape (GTA installer)	fully installed, size-dependent	\$9.90–14.90 per sq ft
Same tiered guide, typical project	400–700 sq ft backyard	\$5,000–\$12,000 total

Material typically accounts for \$3–8 per sq ft of the total, with excavation, aggregate base, compaction, labour and finishing making up the remainder [5]. The spread between entry and premium work is driven less by the turf carpet itself than by what sits under it — Section 6 returns to this.

2 What a typical Pickering project costs

Applying the mid-market band to three representative backyard sizes produces the project estimates in Table 2. The mid-market midpoint (\$15.50/sq ft) is used for the single-figure column; the range column spans the published \$13–\$18 mid band.

Table 2 — Representative project costs at published mid-market rates. Derived from [3]; assumptions in \$M.

Project	Area	At \$15.50/sq ft	At \$13–18/sq ft
Compact courtyard / side yard	300 sq ft	\$4,650	\$3,900–5,400
Typical family backyard	500 sq ft	\$7,750	\$6,500–9,000
Large or deep lot	700 sq ft	\$10,850	\$9,100–12,600

These are planning figures, not quotes: site access, soil conditions and product selection move any specific project within or outside the band. A typical Pickering family backyard of about 500 sq ft — the reference project used throughout this report — lands at **\$6,500–\$9,000 installed**.

3 Ten-year cost comparison: artificial vs natural

The correct comparison frame is total cost of ownership over the surface's service life. Quality residential turf is routinely warranted for 10–15 years [6]; this report uses a ten-year window. Table 3 sets out both ownership stacks. Every figure is either published (and cited) or labelled as an assumption in the methodology.

Table 3 — Ten-year ownership stacks for a 500 sq ft Pickering lawn. Sources and assumptions: [3][7][8]; \$M.

Component	Artificial lawn	Natural lawn (serviced)	Natural lawn (DIY)
Establishment (install / sod + labour)	\$7,750	\$1,000	\$1,000
Irrigation, 27.9 m³/season at Durham combined rates	—	\$101/yr	\$101/yr
Mowing service / own equipment & time	—	\$1,200/yr (A)	time only (A)
Fertilizer, overseeding, weed control	—	\$150/yr (A)	\$150/yr (A)
Upkeep (rinse, brush, infill top-up)	\$100/yr (A)	—	—
Ten-year total	\$8,750	\$15,510	\$3,510 + time

(A) marks a stated assumption, not a sourced figure — see \$M. The two natural-lawn scenarios bracket how Pickering households actually maintain grass: fully serviced care, or do-it-yourself care where the principal cost is the owner's time (roughly 30 hours per season at 24 mows — assumption).

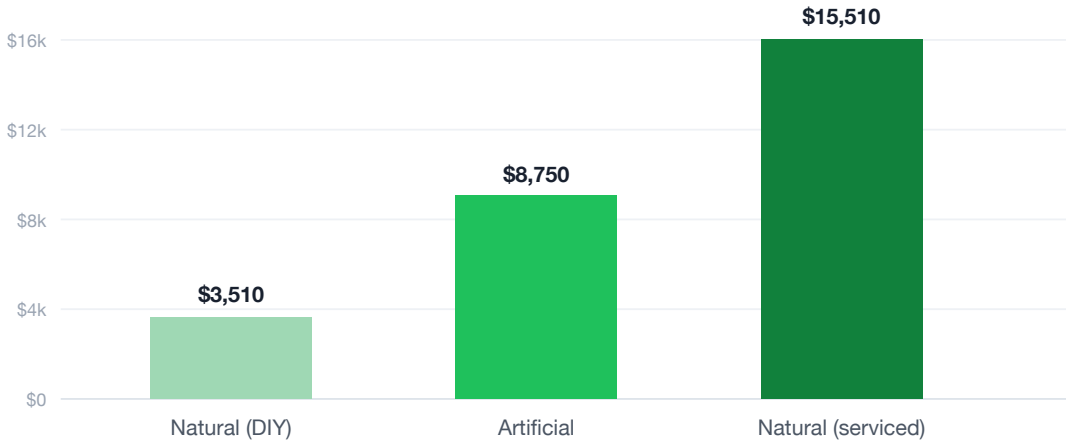


Figure 1 — Ten-year total cost of ownership for a 500 sq ft Pickering lawn under three maintenance regimes. DIY excludes the value of the owner's time. Derived from [3][7][8]; assumptions in \$M.

The finding cuts both ways, and we report both: against **professionally serviced** lawn care, artificial turf is the cheaper ten-year proposition by roughly **\$6,800**; against **do-it-yourself** care, turf never catches up in cash terms — what it purchases instead is roughly 300 hours of the owner's time over the decade, a lawn that stays usable and green through odd-even watering summers, and freedom from re-sodding worn patches.

4 The water component at Durham's rates

Pickering water is billed by the Regional Municipality of Durham through its MyDurhamWater system. Residential customers in the first volumetric block (0–45 m³/month) pay **\$1.358/m³** for water and **\$2.251/m³** for sanitary sewer, for a combined marginal cost of **\$3.609/m³** [9][10]. Durham Council approved a further 5% combined increase effective January 1, 2026 (By-law 2025-054), adding approximately \$5.24/month to the average household bill [11].

Using the growing-season irrigation model described in §M (2.5 cm/week over 24 weeks on 46.45 m²), a 500 sq ft natural lawn consumes **27.9 m³ per season**, costing about **\$101/year** in combined water and wastewater charges at the documented 2025 rate — comfortably inside the first block. Durham's combined rate is notably higher than Peel Region's, making the irrigation line a more visible item on a Pickering homeowner's utility bill.

The dollar figure is deliberately honest: even at Durham's rates, irrigation savings alone do not justify a turf conversion. The water case for turf rests instead on non-cash factors:

- **Restriction resilience.** Durham's mandatory odd-even watering by-law (No. 89-2003) applies every May through September, not only during droughts [12]; in summer 2025 the Region imposed additional mandatory restrictions on North Durham communities during extreme heat [13]. Artificial turf is indifferent to all of these.
- **Runoff and waste.** The U.S. EPA estimates that as much as 50% of outdoor irrigation water is lost to wind, evaporation and runoff [8] — water that in Pickering is drawn from Lake Ontario, treated, and billed at the full combined rate before it ever reaches a root.

LOCAL CONTEXT — DURHAM'S ODD-EVEN BY-LAW

Under Durham Region Water System By-law No. 89-2003, odd-numbered addresses may water only on odd calendar days and even-numbered addresses only on even calendar days, every year from May through September [12]. The rule is mandatory and annual, not drought-contingent. Artificial turf removes the scheduling question entirely.

5 Payback period and sensitivity

Figure 2 tracks cumulative cost year by year. Against serviced lawn care, the 500 sq ft reference project breaks even at **year five** and is roughly \$6,800 ahead by year ten. Because mowing service is largely a flat cost regardless of lawn size, smaller projects break even faster (Table 4): a 300 sq ft courtyard recovers in about three years, while a 700 sq ft project takes close to seven.

Table 4 — Break-even vs serviced lawn care, by project size. *Derived; assumptions in §M.*

Project	Upfront difference	Annual saving	Break-even
300 sq ft	\$4,050	\$1,351	≈3.0 years
500 sq ft	\$6,750	\$1,351	≈5.0 years
700 sq ft	\$9,450	\$1,351	≈7.0 years

Pickering's higher combined water rate shortens payback by roughly a quarter-year compared to municipalities with cheaper water — a modest but real effect over a 10-year horizon.

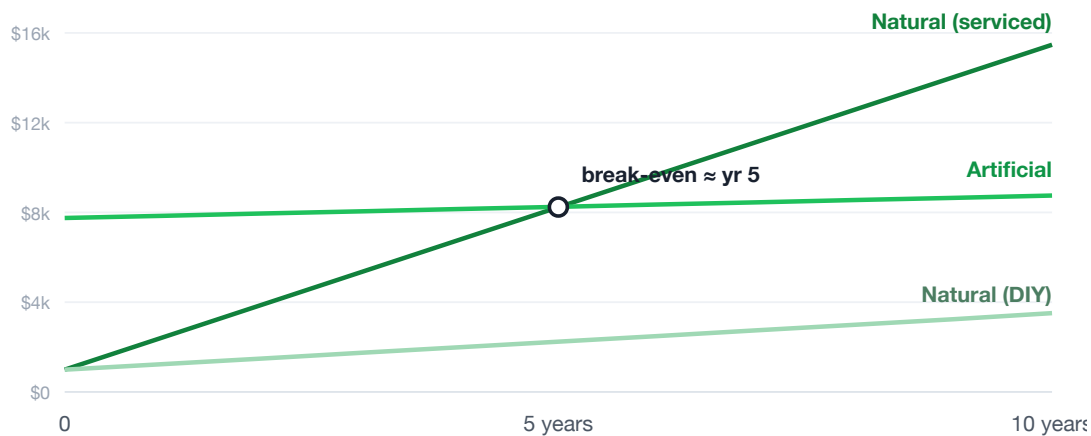


Figure 2 — Cumulative ownership cost, 500 sq ft Pickering lawn, years 0–10. The artificial and serviced-natural curves cross at year five. *Derived; assumptions in \$M.*

6 What moves a quote up or down

Published ranges are wide because site conditions are. The factors Pickering installers price for:

- **Base preparation.** Excavation depth and aggregate volume dominate cost. Ontario averages approximately 77 freeze-thaw cycles per year [14], and Durham's clay-heavy soils heave in winter, so quotes in Pickering routinely include deeper bases and drainage grading [5].
- **Access.** Established Pickering neighbourhoods (West Shore, Amberlea, Liverpool) often mean mature landscaping and narrow side yards, raising labour hours for wheelbarrow access.
- **Product tier.** Face weight, pile height and backing separate a \$10/sq ft entry product from a \$25 premium one; putting-green surfaces sit above even premium landscape turf [3][5].
- **Shape and edges.** Curves, pool coping, tree rings and planting-bed borders add cutting and seaming time.
- **Project size.** Larger areas spread fixed costs (delivery, disposal, equipment) over more square feet, lowering the unit rate [3]. Seaton's narrower 30–40 ft lots tend toward smaller projects, which carry higher per-square-foot pricing [2].

M Methodology & data sources

This is a desk-research report. Published figures were collected in August 2026 from the sources listed under References: the City of Pickering's 2021 Census profile, Durham Region rate and by-law pages, Environment and Climate Change Canada climate normals (Oshawa WPCP station, 1981–2010), a U.S. EPA WaterSense statistics page, Ontario sod supplier pricing, and published GTA installer price guides.

Stated assumptions (not sourced facts): (i) irrigation model — an actively maintained lawn receives 2.5 cm of water per week over a 24-week southern Ontario growing season (a widely used horticultural guideline); (ii) mowing service \$1,200/season; (iii) fertilizer/overseed/weed control \$150/yr; (iv) turf upkeep \$100/yr; (v) sod establishment \$1,000 for 500 sq ft (material approximately \$0.80/sq ft plus site prep and laying labour); (vi) DIY time approximately 30 h/season. Derived figures combine these assumptions with the cited rates; changing any assumption changes the results — Section 5 shows the sensitivity to project size.

Water-rate note: Durham's documented per-m³ rates are from the 2025 rate schedule (\$1.358/m³ water + \$2.251/m³ sewer = \$3.609/m³ combined) [9][10]. Durham Council approved a 5% combined increase effective January 1, 2026 [11]; the exact 2026 per-m³ figures were not published in the sources retrieved for this report. The \$101/yr irrigation figure uses the 2025 rate; at the 2026 rate it would be approximately \$106/yr.

Limitations

Prices are published planning figures, not quotations; actual quotes vary with site conditions. The irrigation model is a guideline-based estimate — real households water differently, and Oshawa's 871.9 mm of well-distributed annual precipitation (the nearest ECCC station to Pickering) reduces irrigation need in normal summers [15]. Ten-year figures are undiscounted nominal dollars. This report is not an engineering, agronomic or financial assessment of any specific property.

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CITE THIS REPORT

Artificial Grass Pickering Research (2026). *Artificial Grass in Pickering: 2026 Cost & ROI Report*. AGP Research Series RR-2026-PIC-01, Pickering, Ontario. <https://artificialgrasspickering.ca/research/artificial-grass-cost-roi-pickering-2026/>

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